MRS. BESANT'S THEOSOPHY

BY

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MRS. BESANT'S THEOSOPHY.

For a considerable time I have seen that Mrs. Besant was gradually drifting away from Secularism. I said nothing, because I had no right to, nor would it have been useful to do so. I was not in her confidence, so that I could not speak with her on the subject; and my conviction of the change which was coming over her was not grounded on anything that could be laid before the public; it was forced upon me by a hundred indications, as though a hundred fingers, at different times and places, all pointed in the same direction.

This conviction filled me with pain for many reasons. I admired Mrs. Besant's eloquence and abilities, and still more her generous and enthusiastic character. These are naturally of great service to whatever cause she espouses. She was also a woman, and that fact weighed even more heavily. There is no other lady of the first rank on the Freethought platform, and in the present transition state of society women are the best missionaries. Until both sexes take an equal part in public affairs, and in the promotion of principles, and while audiences chiefly consist of men, a lady speaker will exercise an influence quite out of proportion to her intellect and information; for difference of sex tells unconsciously, and from the lips of a woman, especially if young or engaging, even commonplaces are apt to pass with men as revelations, and faulty logic is wonderfully convincing.

But what I most admired in Mrs. Besant was her courage. I regard this as the supreme virtue, and by no means a simple one, for it includes many high qualities. Mrs. Besant is a brave as well as a good woman. I have special reasons for saying so, and the writing of this pamphlet is one of the most painful duties I have ever undertaken. Much as I respect Mrs. Besant, I

have a higher respect for truth; much as I regard her feelings, I have a deeper regard for the interests of the Freethought party. There are times, and this is one of them, when persons must yield to principles; and in such cases it is both honest and merciful to speak with the utmost plainness.

Although the change I observed in Mrs. Besant gave me pain, I will now say that it gave me no surprise. Among all her fine qualities she has not the gift of originality. She seems to me very much at the mercy of her emotions, and especially at the mercy of her latest friends. A powerful engine, she runs upon lines laid down for her. Only on this theory can I account for the suddenness of her changes. Nothing could exceed the vehemence with which she attacked Socialism and Socialists after the Bradlaugh-Hyndman debate, but what a brief time elapsed before she was a thorough convert to what she so denounced! Still more sudden is her latest revolution. The news fell upon the Freethought party like a bolt from the blue. Without a word of warning, without a public sign of change, Mrs. Besant printed an article in the *National Reformer*, which, while it puzzled most of its readers, showed them conclusively that she had renounced the greater part of her previous teaching. There was apparently no gradation in the change. At one leap she left Atheism and materialism and plunged into the depths of the wildest Pantheism and spiritualism. Reviewing anonymously Madame Blavatsky's "Secret Doctrine" in the *Pall Mall Gazette* of April 25, she concluded by saying "Of the truth in it our superficial examination is insufficient to decide." Yet in less than six weeks—or two months at the outside—she was a Fellow of the Theosophical Society! Surely no intellect like Mrs. Besant's could undergo such rapid changes *by itself*. Madame Blavatsky on the one side, and Mr. Herbert Burrows on the other, may supply the explanation.

Mrs. Besant said nothing on this subject at the National Secular Society's Conference on June 9, although she must have contemplated, and perhaps written, her Theosophical article in *Lucifer*. Apparently she did not even take Mr. Bradlaugh into her

confidence. He speaks of her conversion to Theosophy as wrought "with somewhat of suddenness, and without any interchange of ideas with myself."*

I must also express my opinion that Mrs. Besant has treated the Freethought party very cavalierly. Men and women with whom she had worked so long were entitled to an explanation. Those she had for years misled, if her new opinions were true, were even entitled to hear her regret the misfortune. But she recognised no such obligation. "It is not possible," she simply said, "for me here to state fully my reasons for joining the Theosophical Society."† Yet only a few days afterwards she wrote "Why I Became a Theosophist" in the *Star*.

I turned to this article with eagerness; I read it with disappointment. The "Why" was a complete misnomer. Mrs. Besant afforded not the slightest explanation. I do not want her to tell me what Theosophy is—for that is all she does, and very inadequately, in the *Star* article. I do not want her to restate as though they were true, positions she formerly assailed as false. Both parties know there is an inside and an outside of every position. I want to know why Mrs. Besant passed over from one side to the other. All she does is to show me a map.

Suppose, for instance, I went over to Christianity. Would it explain *why I* believed in the Resurrection if I put forward the stock arguments in its favor? My friends would be entitled to know what change had taken place *in me*. They would expect to be informed why an argument once looked false and now looks true. Was something overlooked? Has a new light fallen upon the subject? These are questions demanding an answer, and they might be answered honestly even if unsatisfactorily.

Amidst all her changes Mrs. Besant remains quite positive. It does not occur to her that a person who has been mistaken once may be mistaken twice or thrice. The fact that she held one thing yesterday, and holds the opposite to-day, does not shake her self-assurance.

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* *National Reformer*, June 30, 1889 (p. 409). † Ibid.

she does not pause and let time decide whether her new views are permanent. Previous mistakes do not suggest hesitation and self-mistrust. Every time she changes her course she asks others to follow her with perfect confidence.

It is unpleasant to write thus, and I would hold my hand if I were not apprehensive that Mrs. Besant might lead Freethinkers astray. Her procedure on her conversion to Socialism was a warning. She used the Freethought platform, as I think, in an unjustifiable manner. She had not made it; none of us made it; it has been made by hundreds of workers through more than one generation. Yet Mrs. Besant insisted on using it to the uttermost for the ventilation of her new views, on the principle, I suppose, that the end justifies the means. She advocated Socialism in Secular halls, but not Secularism in Socialist meeting-places. I feel, therefore, the danger which now threatens our party, and I speak out simply from a desire to guard it, as far as I may, from this deadly peril. If we are to have a Theosophical agitation carried on in our midst there will be discord and division; and I, for one, even at the risk of being misunderstood, or incurring Mrs. Besant's enmity, prefer to take time by the forelock on this occasion.

From the terms of her eulogy on Madame Blavatsky, I infer that this lady is (at present) Mrs. Besant's guide, philosopher and friend. She takes Theosophy on trust from "the most remarkable woman of her time;" one who asks for no reward but "trust," which is what every mystery-monger starts with, and leads to everything else; one who has "left home and country, social position and wealth," in order to bring us lessons from "the Wise Men of the East."

Has Mrs. Besant made inquiry into these things, or has she succumbed, body and soul, to the spell of the sorceress? Where *is* Madame Blavatsky's home, what *is* her country, what *was* her social position, and what the extent of her wealth? Many persons would like these questions answered. Twenty years ago Madame Blavatsky was practising as a spiritist "mejum" in America. In 1872 she gave *séances* in Egypt. Three

years later she started the Theosophical Society. In India she was cordially welcomed, and many signs and wonders attended her steps. None of them, it is true, were of the slightest use to mankind. Cigarettes and broken saucers played a leading part in the "manifestations." The miracles were investigated on behalf of the Society for Psychical Research by Mr. R. Hodgson, who went out for the purpose, and reported them as "part of a huge fraudulent system."* A fuller exposure is the pamphlet by Madame Coulomb, one of Madame Blavatsky's friends.† This lady reveals the whole mystery of sliding panels, hidden holes, and secreted articles whose position was indicated by the spirits who placed them there! The letters from Madame Blavatsky to her *chère amie* are those of a thorough-paced adventuress. She repudiated them as forgeries, but she does not vindicate herself in the law courts, and the letters certainly came from a more clever and fertile brain than Madame Coulomb's.

What has passed between Mrs. Besant and Mde. Blavatsky I know not, nor am I anxious for information; but the fact is public that the neophyte has been greatly influenced by *The Secret Doctrine*, a bulky work in two quarto volumes, containing nearly 1500 pages. An admirable review of this ponderous first half of the new revelation has been written by my colleague, Mr. J. M. Wheeler,‡ whose knowledge of Brahminism and Buddhism, as well as of general "occult" literature, it would take Mrs. Besant many years of close study to rival. For my own part, I cannot say that I have *read* these volumes; but I have *looked* through them, and read some portions carefully. Where it touches upon matters I am more or less familiar with, the work seems a terrible jumble of second-hand knowledge and first-hand pretence. However Mrs. Besant could read some of it without a guffaw at Mde. Blavatsky's credulity, or disgust at her arrogance, passes my comprehension. The mysterious

* *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, vol. iii., p. 210.

† *Some Account of my Intercourse with Madame Blavatsky from 1872 to 1884.* By Madame Coulomb. London: Eliot Stock.

‡ *Freethinker*, July 14, 1889.

Book of Dzyan, which forms the basis of this revelation, and from which seven enigmatic stanzas are translated as a sample, and as much as the feeble Western intellect can stand at present, is boldly declared to be of such antiquity that a later book, 5,000 years old, is juvenile in comparison. We are introduced to a Thibetan monastery, far away among hills that no European foot has ever trodden, with subterranean galleries and halls containing books which could not "find room even in the British Museum." This mistress of Theosophy assures us that monsters are still "bred from human and animal parents," and refers us for proof to unspecified "medical records." She denounces Darwinism, and will not hear of our ape-like ancestry. Her theory of apes is that they are the offspring of bestiality between men and animals! The pineal gland is the atrophied "third eye," a fact apparently not discovered by Theosophists until scientific speculation had arisen on the subject. But this third eye was really the first. Man had one eye to begin with, somewhere at the top or the back of his head; the two eyes in front were developed afterwards, and the original optic atrophied away. But if man had at first only one eye, he was compensated by having four arms. Such is the biological wisdom of this amazing book!

Mde. Blavatsky banters the geologists smartly on their chronological differences. She could tell them the true chronology "an she would." Meanwhile she does something safer; she reveals the chronology of the future. The Americans are the founders of the coming race. About 25,000 years hence they will really begin business. Europe and the whole Aryan race will be destroyed, and after "many hundreds of milleniums" the Sixth-Root Race will be perfected. Mde. Blavatsky and Prophet Baxter are in the same line, but two of *that* trade never agree.

Natural Selection, we are told, is an exploded doctrine. Haeckel, Huxley and Büchner, whom Mrs. Besant has translated, are "the intellectual and moral murderers of future generations." Haeckel, indeed, is more than wicked; he is "idiotic." Atheists and

materialists, if versed in anatomy, are "hopelessly insane." This statement, I presume, after Mrs. Besant's conversion, will be modified in any future edition.

Mde. Blavatsky speaks of the "materialised forms which are sometimes seen oozing out of the bodies of certain mediums." This was a primeval mode of *sexless* procreation, before the race fell into carnality, and it "cannot fail to be suggestive to the student." Indeed it cannot! If Mrs. Besant has swallowed this Wisdom of the East, it is no wonder that Mr. Bradlaugh "looks to possible developments of her Theosophic opinions with the very gravest misgiving."

Leaving Mde. Blavatsky's book for the present, I come to what Mrs. Besant herself says about Thesophy. In the first place it is Oriental. But that is not special, for all our Western religions came from the East. Many years ago Mrs. Besant rejected the Oriental creed in which she was nurtured. She now accepts another, and I fear just as blindly. Yet she thought herself out of the first, and perhaps she will think herself out of the second.

"The Orient," Mrs. Besant tells us, "begins to study the universe just where the Occident ceases to study," which is a pretty way of saying that the Orient has an insatiable appetite for metaphysics, while the Occident has developed a taste for science and positive methods. The result is that while the East is searching with the patience of a million jackasses for hidden wisdom, the West is master of scientific knowledge and practical wisdom, and is thus able to rule the East with striking facility. The grip of fact is the secret of mastery. All this Eastern philosophy, except in some of its ethical aspects, is like the German's account of the camel, developed from his inner consciousness. Only the poverty of the human imagination prevents there being a thousand different theories of the universe, past, present, and to come, all equally sound, and all equally hollow. That Theosophy, or Esoteric Buddhism, hangs together, goes for nothing. Catholicism hangs together, Calvinism hangs together, Swedenborg's elaborate mysticism hangs together; and for the same reason that a drama, a novel, or a romance hangs together;

because the imagination has its laws as well as the intellect, and construction is construction whether the materials are fancies or facts.

Western positive philosophy discourages the spinning of systems, spider-like, out of ourselves. It deals with the How, not with the Why, and takes its stand on the relativity of knowledge. Every sentient being learns what it does learn by using its intelligence upon the evidence of its senses. All knowledge, therefore, is necessarily phenomenal. What noumena, or things in themselves, may be, or whether they exist at all, are idle and indifferent questions. Sugar is sweet, and if we know nothing, and can know nothing of substance, the sweetness is all the same.

Mrs. Besant has been satisfied with this philosophy hitherto, but now she yearns for something higher. She is impatient at the thought that "the Why ever eludes us," that "causes remain enwrapped in gloom." She follows a vibration along a nerve until she comes to a sensation in the brain. Formerly she was satisfied with the phenomenal succession; now she asks for "the causal link." She admits that science cannot give it; and she might have added that since the days of David Hume it has been obvious to experientialists that the "causal link" is a figment of imagination. She regards its absence, or rather its occultness, as a chasm and as a blank wall; but the latter metaphor has her preferencc, for she presently sees Theosophy coming down (where from?) as "a fairly long ladder," and tries her "luck at scaling it." I hope she will pardon me for leaving her there. Scaling the Infinite is a pretty long climb. According to a more commonplace metaphor, Mrs. Besant is trying to get out of her own skin.

She admits as much, indeed, for the sublime investigation of causal links requires "further mental equipment than that normally afforded by the human body." This is enough to daunt common people, but Mrs. Besant introduces her "Eastern sages" who have superior faculties, and can see through millstones and into the middle of next week. They wield mysterious powers "miraculous to the ordinary person." Mrs.

Besant instances clairvoyance, mesmerism, and hypnotism as abnormal faculties ; but clairvoyance has never been established as a fact, and nothing has transpired in mesmerism and hypnotism which goes beyond the power the operator exerts through the patient's imagination.

These " Eastern sages," or Mahatmas, dwell on such lofty planes of thought and power that, like men on mountains, they have to be very careful what they drop down. A big truth might floor us all, so they dribble out a little at a time. " Ultimately," says Mrs. Besant, " in the course of myriad generations, the whole race will reach this higher plane." What an elevation it must be ! Three hundred thousand years, at least, must elapse before the mass of us will arrive there ! Theosophy cuts up the cake of Time in remarkably big slices.

Some of the hidden wisdom of the Initiates, Adepts, Arhats, Mahatmas, or Masters, has " filtered out during the last few years," and here it is in *The Secret Doctrine*. Mr. Wheeler describes it as " a complete hodge-podge of Yogi philosophy, Esoteric Buddhism, Ignatius Donelly, Ragon and Eliphas Levi." Mde. Blavatsky is widely read in the barren literature of occultism, has a good memory, a ready command of her resources and a facile pen. But we look in vain for method and lucidity. Dr. Tylor's *Primitive Culture* is a work of scientific genius ; Mde. Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine* is the work of an accomplished charlatan.

Hidden wisdom is an easy thing to boast of. The showman may enjoy a boundless reputation who is never obliged to draw the curtain. Were the Adepts to speak out, the world would see whether they are so much wiser than Homer, Æscyhlus, Plato, Aristotle, Virgil, Lucretius, Dante, Spinoza, Bacon and Shakespeare. The really great and wise men have poured fourth their wisdom royally, like the sovereign sun that sheds its glorious rays on all, leaving everything to profit as it can.

As a matter of fact, except for its pretentious orientalisms, there is nothing in Theosophy, as Mrs. Besant has accepted it, which she could not have picked up

in the benighted West. That man's Ego is immortal is the current doctrine of Christendom. That Nature is the manifestation of intelligence is taught almost universally. Mesmerism is a commonplace of evening entertainments. Second-sight once abounded in the Scotch highlands. Materialised spirit forms turn up at ordinary *séances*. "Mejums" carry on daily communication with the spirit world. The mystic number seven flourishes in the Bible. Karma itself, without the doctrine of transmigration, is taught by every great moralist; thoughts and deeds become habits, and habit is second nature.

Freethinkers will note the immense change in Mrs. Besant's views. She has "no personal God," but, "the universe is essentially Intelligence." Matter is *Maya*, illusion; the Theosophist, like the Berkleyan idealist, "seeks in the mental and spiritual planes of being the causes of the material effects." Mrs. Besant has turned right about face; and, once started on this new path, there is no saying where she will go.

Besides her "essentially Intelligence" universe, or perhaps I should say *in it*, Mrs. Besant has now a multitude of "intelligent beings" other than mankind, whose operations we mistake for "the forces of nature." After death our Ego re-incarnates itself, again and again, until it has purified itself from desire, when re-incarnation is no longer neccessary, and "a man passes on to higher planes of being." Those who have thus passed on are a part of the "intelligent beings" aforesaid.

Spiritism, of course, is the logical issue of this fanciful philosophy. Theosophists seem all infected with this melancholy superstition, which flourishes in gross luxuriance among savages; and it is to be feared that Mrs. Besant will not escape the contagion.

Spiritism was not brought in by Theosophy, nor was the doctrine of re-incarnation. Mrs Besant might have learned it without the aid of Mde. Blavatsky. The transmigration of souls was a special feature of the religion of ancient Egypt. It was taught by Plato. It was received among the Jews; witness Herod's exclamation about Jesus—"This is John the Baptist, whom I beheaded." The demons who took up their

abode in "possessed" persons were also supposed to be the souls of deceased wicked men. Metempsychosis was gravely satirised in the seventeenth century by Dr. Donne in a remarkably learned and powerful poem. The pre-existence of the soul, which is an aspect of the same doctrine, is insisted on in Wordsworth's great *Ode* on Immortality, where the poet adopts Plato's doctrine of reminiscence. Tennyson refers to the forgetfulness in one incarnation of our experience in previous ones.

> Some draught of Lethe doth await,
> As old mythologies relate,
> The slipping through from state to state.

These literary references are not recondite, and I cannot help feeling surprised at Mrs. Besant's being struck, through the agency of the Theosophic sorceress, with the charming novelty of very ancient doctrines.

Still less do I understand her deception as to the sacred number seven, which is so frequent in Theosophy. Mrs. Besant accepts the "sevenfold nature of man" from the Wise Men of the East through the prophetess Blavatsky; and, having swallowed one seven, I suppose she will not scruple at the rest. This seven business, like *lunacy*, comes from the moon. Early men found out the lunar twenty-eight days; they halved that number and found fourteen; they halved this and found seven; they tried to halve that and failed. This indivisible number was also connected with sexual periodicities, and thus it became mysterious and sacred. This accounts for its constant recurrence in religious systems.

According to Mde. Blavatsky "the number of Monads is necessarily finite and limited." They arrived on this earth (from somewhere) in emigrant streams long ago, but in time this planet got stocked. Mr. Sinnett indulges in an innocent speculation as to their number. This is still undecided, though it is agreed that the number is large enough to necessitate an interval of centuries between one incarnation and another. Mde. Blavatsky says "many centuries." Mr. Sinnett says "fifteen hundred years at least." Theo-

sophy, it appears, though supernally wise, is rather vague in its arithmetic.

A principal doctrine of Buddhism is Karma, and this is a leading tenet of Theosophy. "Karma," Mrs. Besant says, "is the expression of eternal justice, whereby each reaps exactly as he has sown. It is the impersonal law of retribution, distributing the fruit of good and bad actions. During one incarnation is wrought the Karma which shall mould the circumstances of the next, so that each man beautifies or mars his own future. None can escape from the operation of Karma, nor modify it save by the creation of fresh. Karma presides, so to speak, over each re-incarnation, so that the Ego passes into such physical and mental environment as it deserves."

Thus the problem of evil no longer disturbs Mrs. Besant. She now sees nothing but "eternal justice." Karma, says Mde. Blavatsky, reconciles us to "the terrible and *apparent* injustice of life." According to Mr. Sinnett "the great inequalities of life" are perfectly explained. Each of us gets exactly what he deserves, aud grumblers should reflect that suffering and degradation are simply "a new way to pay old debts." The subtle Sinnett relaxes, however, in the case of accidents. Cripples, and children injured at birth, are victims of those little disorders that will happen in the best regulated families; but there is consolation in the thought that "the undeserved suffering of one life is amply redressed under the operation of the Karmic law in the next, or the next." Beautiful! "Blessed are ye that mourn *now*, for ye *shall* be comforted."

How Mrs. Besant reconciles Karma with Socialism I leave her to explain. I am not a devotee of Socialism myself, but I respect its objects if I dissent from its policy. But if each man "reaps exactly as he has sown," if each Ego goes into "such physical and mental environment as it deserves," the Socialist—and, indeed, *every* social reformer—is fighting against Karma; while denunciation of landlords, capitalists, and all privileged persons, is silly screaming against "eternal justice." Thus, at least, it appears to me. But I do

not dogmatise; I am open to learn; and I will listen to what answer Mrs. Besant brings me from the Wise Men of the East.

Theosophy, of course, like every other system, has its moral aspects, and Mrs. Besant deems them superlatively beautiful. I do not share her admiration; on the contrary, I regard the ethics of Theosophy as detestable.

Mrs. Besant gravely tells us that Altruism "differentiates" Theosophy from "all other systems;" as though disinterestedness and self-sacrifice were not heard of before the gospel of Blavatsky; as though, indeed, she had not herself written a pamphlet on Auguste Comte, whose maxim was *Vivre Pour Autrui*—Live For Others. Altruism has existed in every ethical system. No sane person thinks of neglecting its august claims. Religious systems, however, have a knack of carrying everything to excess, and Theosophy is no exception to the rule. Mrs. Besant is not satisfied with giving society as well as the individual its rights. Self is not only to be subordinated to the general good, it is "to be destroyed." We must be "wholly selfless," we must "kill out all personal desires." Could anything be more grotesque? Could anything be more pernicious? Such a philosophy, if carried out, would reduce its devotees to the flabbiest sentimentality and the most hopeless impotence. Fancy, for instance, the attempt to perpetuate the race, not by sexual desire, but by altruistic principles! It is individual passion that moves us. Without it we should stagnate, decay, and perish. Every individual is necessarily the *centre* of his own world. The difference between good and bad men is a question of *circumference*. How many are included in the range of one's sympathies? The selfish man includes few, the unselfish man many, the true saint all. Even then the imagination, which again is individual, interposes its limitations. Thus we are profoundly moved by calamities at home, and read of calamities in distant, and especially alien countries, with scarcely a sigh.

We may liken the individual and the social instincts to the centrifugal and centripetal forces which keep

the earth revolving in its orbit. Mrs. Besant would abolish the centrifugal force and shoot the earth into the sun. This magnificent imperialism may have its charms, but the majority of sensible people prefer a compromise in the shape of Home Rule.

"Identifying the individual with the all" is a fine-sounding phrase. The doctrine, however, is that of ascetics in all ages and climes. As a mood it has its value; it is suicidal as a philosophy. The mystics who cut themselves off from society, immured themselves in cells or hermitages, sought for "purification," trampled upon "self," and tried to extinguish all "personal desire," were identifying themselves with, God. Theosophy substitutes "the all" for God, but it is the same old process with a new name.

The final ethical developments of Theosophy are suggested by Mrs. Besant, and they should be carefully noted. Within the Theosophical Society there is an "inner circle" of those who desire to enter on "the Path." For "obvious reasons" Mrs. Besant says little about this doubly esoteric circle. The reasons may be "obvious" to her, but twenty people, I venture to say, would give twenty different guesses. However, we must take what is vouchsafed. The inner circle, it appears, must "abstain from all intoxicants"—not including Theosophy; and "the use of meat is discountenanced." So far there is nothing very "occult" in the prescription. Teetotalism is at least as old as the Nazarites, and is a rule of Mohammedanism; while Vegetarianism, also a very ancient practice, is spreading quite independently of Theosophy.

The third point is the critical one. Those who mean to pursue the Path "must lead a celibate life." That is the centre of gravity of all these "spiritual" systems. The poor flesh is to be mortified, whipped, and suppressed. The spirit is to be all in all. At a single bound Mrs. Besant reaches the sexual doctrine of St. Paul. All her old teaching on this point is cast to the winds. Page on page of her pamphlet on *Marriage* must be cancelled to bring it into conformity with the new doctrine. Marriage is now a mere concession to human weakness. Celibacy is the counsel

of perfection. The sacred names of husband and wife, father and mother, are to be deposed as usurpers. At the very best they are only to be tolerated. It is idle to reply that celibacy is only for the "inner circle." If it be the loftiest rule of life, it should be aimed at by all.

Celibacy is *not* the loftiest rule of life. Physically, mentally, and morally, it is attended with the gravest dangers. What it has led to in pietist circles is only too well known. Turned out of doors, nature climbs in at the window. The frustration of honest instinct makes men and women flighty and feverish, or fills them with the *malaise* of unsatisfied yearning. Disused functions avenge themselves, and the body becomes a hospital or a churchyard of effete, vicious, or cadaverous organs.

Spiritism on the one side, and celibacy on the other, are the evil angels of Theosophy. I will not venture to speculate on where they may lead an ardent and devoted nature like Mrs. Besant's. She is not an adventuress, and is more likely to be the victim than the mistress of this superstition. Others may be only partially deluded, and sufficiently free to find influence and profit in ministering to the credulity of their dupes. But Mrs. Besant is made of different stuff. She will go on "the Path" with perfect confidence; she will preach and proselytise. What will be will be; the end I cannot foresee or avert. Yet I will cherish a hope that a lady so gifted, so eloquent, so devoted, and so brave, may some day see that Theosophy itself is *Maya*, or illusion, and return to the sound and bracing philosophy that once guided and inspired her.